

The Blue Sahara

Petty Officer 2nd Class Demetrius Kennon, 25, is stationed at Naval Air Station Meridian. His interests include poetry, psychology, economics, golf, photography and journalism.

Much as soldiers in the Middle East learn that the suspended sand and dust in the air creates beautiful sunsets, and stare at them for hours, so sailors are mesmerized by the ever-changing character of the ocean that covers most of the world.

"The Blue Sahara" was written about four years ago. I wrote it on my last ship, the USS Nimitz, during a two-month transit from Virginia to San Diego," Demetrius said.

"There was always something going on but, whenever I got the chance, I'd sit out on the sponson just outside my workplace and look at the ocean. I gave me peace in times of chaos. And the sunsets ... magnificent! That was my inspiration."

From its sands
grow the most dangerous obstacles
No hospitals for days.
In so many ways,
it's beautiful and terrifying at the same time.
Minds are lost and found.
Days are played and rewound.
Heartbeats don't make a sound.
Apathy is the dominant emotion.
Not even Love Potion No. 9
can find devotion.
Not in this ocean of tears,
this desert of fears.

... But to see the sun set on the Blue Sahara
brings to life the complete opposite of horror.
Peace is the word I'm looking for,
so are the souls on this tour.
As long as stress remains the occupant of the mind,
To life the eyes are made blind
where time doesn't exist until the last minute.
Before it's all finished,
Life will be lived
Without the most important part in it.
... So don't continue to sail with an unconscious heart
over His tears that I call the Blue Sahara.

— Demetrius Kennon



Kennon



MILITARY TWINS

Justin and Austin Brown are twin brothers who are serving our country as members of the U.S. military. They attended West Lauderdale High School through the 10th grade, then transferred to Newton County High School, where they graduated in 2001. Justin, right, joined the U.S. Marines in 2001 and was ultimately stationed at Camp Pendleton, Calif., where he became section leader of a mortar section. He served in Iraq in the Sunni Triangle as a rifleman infantry team leader and has now returned to the United States. He is married to the former Amber Herrington of Meridian. Austin, top, joined the U.S. Army in November 2002 and was assigned to the "Big Red One" Infantry Division. He was sent to Iraq in September 2003, where he served as a machine gunner in the Sunni Triangle and engaged in house-to-house searches. The twins are the sons of Debbie Todd of Chunky and Daniel Brown of Collinsville. They are the grandsons of Ruby Brown of Collinsville, Gerald Todd of Chunky and the late Martha Lynn Todd.

SUBMITTED PHOTOS



Open on your 18th birthday



Capt. Jeff Dickman and his son, Ryan.

SUBMITTED PHOTO

Capt. Jeff Dickman is commanding officer of Naval Air Station Meridian. He assumed command in August 2001 after a tour of duty at the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. The captain plans to retire in September of this year, at the end of his Meridian tour. He's not sure what his career move into the civilian world will be, but it will probably involve executive level management.

Jeff and his wife, Kelly, have three children — Joe, Ryan and Kyla.

This feature falls out of Ryan's friendship with Zirk Ray. Both are sophomores at Lamar School in Meridian. Zirk asked his classmate's father, Capt. Jeff Dickman, to participate in a project for "Profile 2005: A Letter from Home."

The captain's assignment was this: Imagine that you are writing a letter to your son to be opened on his 18th birthday. Here's what he wrote.

Dear Son,

Happy 18th birthday! As you finish up your last year in high school, and begin to prepare for college, I wanted to tell you what what I was thinking when I was in your shoes.

While at Boys State, I listened to students from the Naval, Air Force and military academies talk about their experiences. At that point, I decided that the challenge and adventure was something I wanted to try.

The Naval Academy was my first choice as it offered the most options on graduation — flying, USMC infantry and driving ships and submarines. When I received my appointment letter, I felt very lucky to get into this highly competitive school.

As I spent my years at the academy, I learned a great deal about life in the Navy. I also began to build an appreciation for the freedoms we have and for those who stood up and fought for those freedoms. I really began to feel that I was in a profession that made a difference.

I have now moved on to a second career. I take with me fond memories of adventure, leadership challenges and comrades-in-arms. I know that you, too, will find a rewarding career.

Just remember to always give it your best effort, be honest with others and with yourself, and listen to all perspectives with an open mind.

Love,
Dad



Ray

Read about this year's
Citizen of the Year
on the cover of "Profile 2005:
A Letter from Home."